

ENGINE WITH ROTARY CYLINDER BLOCK AND RECIPROCATING PISTONS**TECHNICAL FIELD**

- 5 The present invention relates to improvements to engines, and particularly internal combustion engines.

BACKGROUND ART

- The most commonly known type of internal combustion engine is the reciprocating piston engine, where the linear reciprocating movement of the
10 pistons is driven by fuel ignition and combustion.

The linear motion of the pistons is converted into a rotary motion by the crankshaft. Typically the crankshaft is positioned external to the engine block and provides a portion to connect the engine to devices such as to the drive of a vehicle or an electrical generator.

- 15 In virtually all conventional engines the block and head are fixed, and form an immovable part of the engine; they are thereby limited to the amount of usable work that they can contribute, and so it is that all work and power outputs are delivered solely via the crankshaft. What's more, any substantial
20 rotational momentum must be provided by a flywheel attached to the crankshaft.

- Conventional engines then have relatively large and heavy crankshafts and engine blocks (especially if the engine has multiple pistons and cylinders). The need for such large and heavy parts is in part as a result of the high forces
25 transferred by the piston to the crankshaft (and engine block via bearings) at initial ignition, as the journal to which the piston connects on the crankshaft is in line, or close thereto to the line of travel (and force) of the piston and connecting rod at the time of ignition.

- 30 Conventional engines have a head component (or part), that is complex and

troublesome because the inside of the head at each cylinder region forms one of two main sides to the combustion chamber and is joined there by a head gasket and bolts, and it is against this head that combustion pressure exerts itself to cause the piston to move.

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Patent number GB488336 discloses a rotary engine that is composed of exposed single cylinder engines or cylinders that rotate but do so driven by the crankshaft primarily. It does not claim an invention having a cylinder positioned to obtain the best leverage and the prime mover to give rotation.

10 Therefore this engine would have a similar per cylinder performance as a conventional engine.

It is an object of the present invention to provide an engine that overcomes or at least substantially ameliorates the problems associated with the engines of the prior art.

15 Other objects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following description, taken in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein, by way of illustration and example, an embodiment of the present invention is disclosed.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

20 In one form of this invention there is proposed an engine having a fixed portion and at least one separate cylinder block that defines at least one bore in which a piston can reciprocate, wherein the cylinder block rotates relative to the fixed portion to provide a work output.

Preferably the fixed portion is a casing.

25 Preferably the cylinder block is a rotor.

Preferably the fixed portion retains that rotor such that the rotor is free to rotate about an axis of rotation passing through its centre.

Preferably the piston is oriented within the cylinder block such that the magnitude and sense of combustion are directed so as to maximise rotational effect of the cylinder block around its axis of rotation, relative to the fixed portion.

- 5 Preferably the piston has attached to it driving means that convert its reciprocating motion to a circular motion that assists in rotating the cylinder block relative to the fixed portion.

Preferably the driving means for each piston include a connecting rod, a crankshaft, and at least one pinion gear connected to the crankshaft such that

- 10 the pinion gear engages at least one ring type gear fixed to the fixed portion.

Preferably the piston is oriented in a plane normal to the centre of rotation of the block.

Preferably the piston is oriented with its head pointed in the direction that the cylinder block will rotate.

- 15 Preferably the piston is offset from the centre of rotation of the block.

In a further form, the invention may be said to lie in a method of effecting a cycle of an engine wherein as a working fluid in a cylinder bore expands and drives the cylinder and a block in opposing directions, this in turn rotates a pinion gear that is connected to a crankshaft, the pinion gear engages a ring

- 20 type gear fixed to a fixed portion, such that the rotation of the pinion gear on the ring type gear rotates the cylinder block relative to the fixed portion thereby providing a work output, whilst simultaneously driving the piston back into a position where it can accept and then compress a fresh charge.

Preferably the fresh charge comprises fresh working fluid.

- 25 Preferably the fresh charge comprises working fluid and fuel.

Preferably the working fluid is air.

Preferably the working fluid is steam.

Preferably the engine is an internal combustion engine.

Preferably the cylinder is spaced apart from the said centre drive shaft in the centre of the engine, and end plates connect the first and second sides to said

5 shaft.

Preferably the engine has provided ignition and fuel and air for the combustion process means added effective in the cylinder and that may be of any current type and suitable to "fire" and drive the piston and the invention is able to use fuel of any type.

10 Preferably the said circular cylinder has a slot shaped aperture around its central side, the side of the cylinder facing the centre and drive shaft.

Preferably a shaft connects to a disc like rotor that extends from the shaft into the said cylinder via the said slot aperture in the cylinder. Preferably in one embodiment at least one piston is attached to said rotor.

15 Preferably the piston is attached to the said rotor on the rotor edge periphery edge inside the cylinder and said rotor periphery edge is shaped to match and complete the circle-curve cross section of the said circular cylinder.

20 Preferably said piston is adapted to be attached to said rotor in a manner that enables the piston to move in effect back and forth in the rotor even while the rotor is spinning. Such movement is of a limited distance reciprocal in nature or in effect reciprocating. The movement is provided so that the piston can create a stroke and assist to create a combustion chamber and cycle.

25 Preferably the said piston obtains said movement on the rotor by being attached to the rotor on above said arm or (a connecting arm or rod or plate mechanism).

Preferably the connection of the arm to the rotor in one example is with the arm's first end fixed close to the rotor centre, thereby creating and allowing the arm's backwards and forward movement to be pivotal from the rotor centre, thereby the pistons movement in the cylinder on the arm in the rotor is upon 5 the same radius as the cylinder radius.

Preferably the arm is located in an aperture in the rotor, such aperture having a first and second side and a first and second end, each preferably parallel to each other and again slot like in design, so that the rotor has a continuous surface on either side to enable it to rotate within the cylinder slot, and to 10 which sides of the rotor seals or bearings can be fitted or engaged upon.

Preferably the piston is elongated in shape and is of adequate or extra length than otherwise would be needed so that the aperture for the arm in the rotor is covered by the elongated piston. The piston having at least one sealing or piston ring or set thereof at one end, preferably the front piston end is the 15 preferred combustion chamber end.

Preferably the piston is caused to move back and forward in said aperture in said rotor by a mechanism that has a first part on the cylinder block or rotor and a second part away from the rotor. (i.e. the second part is on the outside of the cylinder in a particular location).

20 Preferably the second part mechanism is a gear (ring or star), and preferably the first part is a wheel or planetary gear. Preferably the planetary gear connects with a crank lever action to the aforesaid mechanism arm of the piston.

25 Preferably the planetary gear is fixed to the cylinder block or rotor in a precise position by a shaft, and is supported to the shaft on bearings about which the gear can rotate, the gear meshed with the said first part ring or star gear stationary fixed to the engine, thereby when the engine is turned or turns the planetary gear moves rotationally with the rotor and revolves by its connection to the outside gear, thereby causing the crank lever to move back and forward 30 and consequently to move the piston backwards and forward.

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- Preferably, when the rotor is caused to turn (by such as an engine starting starter motor the planetary gear is caused to turn (on an axis of its connection to the rotor) and by being connected via its teeth to the gear on the engine, and by turning the planetary gear moves an attached crank shaft like lever
- 5 connected to said piston arm and thereby moves the said arm and piston back and forth, the rotor is prevented from kicking back at the time of ignition by the placement of said lever to said arm, and on said gears, and by the provision of gears, one of which is connected to the outside and is stationary and by the planetary gear turning rotationally on its shaft on the rotor in a direction that
- 10 transfers any piston backward pressure or motion via the outside gear to forward rotation of the rotor.

Preferably the arm and piston moves rotationally with the rotor while remaining free to move independently of the rotor in a relative back and forth direction manner.

- 15 Preferably the said cylinder block has a second piston similar to the first, located inside of it and that piston runs in the same rotor or cylinder block as the first piston. The second piston can be attached rigidly to said rotor or said second piston can be attached in the same way and with the same independent movement back and forth and by the same said similar gear and
- 20 crank mechanism as is the method of fixing the first piston.

The said second piston is located on one side of the said first piston and in one aspect acts to provide a second side to the combustion chamber and in a second aspect is provided to be the mechanism that turns the rotor by the pressure from fuel burning and drives the engine.

- 25 Preferably the said second piston is provided to the front side of the first piston, the first side of the combustion chamber and the two pistons work as a pair to cycle and drive the rotor and thereby to drive the engine.

30 Preferably the second piston connection to the rotor and to the outside of the engine mechanism is arranged so that when fuel is ignited (burnt) in the combustion chamber or space between said pistons the pressure in the

- backwards direction from such combustion does not significantly if at all effect the forward travel of the second piston and the rotor, because the crank shaft type connection via a gear and the gear turns freely on a bearing on the rotor and moves in the right manner so that this does not occur, as aforesaid above,
- 5 assisted by the second piston being moveable independently, thereby allowing greater freedom and distance of adjustment to obtain combustion when the pistons come together, and without loss through kick-back travel or pressure, the second piston independent travel adjusted with relation to the first piston's independent travel to obtain the best movement and effect in this
- 10 respect.

Preferably the first piston so arranged provides a first and one side to the combustion chamber, and by its independent movement acts in a manner similar to the head of an engine side of the combustion chamber of a conventional and reciprocating piston kind engine.

- 15 Preferably the invention provides that the first piston is caused to decelerate in its speed at the time of initial and continuing combustion stroke, with respect to the acceleration or speed of the second piston and of the rotor's rotation and is able to do so by its said connection via a crank shaft or lever to the revolving planetary gear location on the side of centre of the gear that causes the lever
- 20 to move in the opposite direction to the rotor (by gear use), and can apply a force to turn the rotor via its connection to the stationary ring or star gear outside.

Preferably a suitable flywheel and or counter balance mechanism is added to the engine. Alternatively the rotor itself will act as a flywheel.

- 25 In a further embodiment the gears may be replaced with tooth belts and pulleys.

Preferably the engine has a firing cycle that is sequential.

Preferably uses either a two stroke or four stroke cycle, or any other suitable stroke cycle.

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Preferably plate like end covers are provided over the outside ends to the cylinder shaft and gears, and provide the support for bearings and seals for the said drive shaft.

- Preferably, conventional fuel ignition, air supply and exhaust removal means
5 are utilised to produce a functional internal combustion engine.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a better understanding of this invention it will now be described with respect to the preferred embodiment which shall be described herein with the assistance of drawings wherein;

- 10 Figure 1 is an exploded view of the engine showing hidden detail;

Figure 2 is a sectional view through the block and casing at A-A.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

- Now referring to the illustrations, and in particular to Figure 1, there is a fuel burning internal combustion engine 1 having a fixed portion in the form of
15 casing 2 and a separate cylinder block 3. The block 3 is a rotor that is retained by the casing 2 such that the rotor is free to rotate about an axis of rotation 14 passing through its centre.

It is to be understood by a person skilled in the relevant art that an external casing is not a rigid requirement to make the invention work, all that is need is an external structure to which a ring gear can be attached, such as a plate, block or the like.

- 5 The block 3 defines combustion chambers 22 for four cylinders 4; each cylinder including pistons 5, connecting rods 6, and crankshafts 7. The combustion chambers 22, are positioned adjacent to and on a trailing side to the direction of block rotation direction, on a radial line 23 extending outwardly from the engine's centre axis 14.
- 10 Gudgeon pins 9 and 10 connect the pistons 5 to crankshafts 7, which in turn have pinion gears 11 attached to them.

Block 3 is adapted to move rotationally around axis 14, with rotation in the same direction as that of the hollow output and centre shaft 13.

- 15 Combustion of an air fuel mix in combustion chambers 22 drives the piston 5 and block 3 in opposing directions, this in turn rotates the pinion gear 11 that is connected to the crankshaft 7, the pinion gear 11 also engages a ring type gear 12 fixed to the casing 2, such that the rotation of the pinion gear 11 on the ring type gear 12 rotates the cylinder block 3 relative to the casing 2 thereby providing a work output, whilst simultaneously driving the piston 5 back into a position where it can accept and then compress a fresh charge of air and fuel.
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At the moment following ignition in the combustion chamber 22, engine block 3 begins moving rotationally, and the piston 5 moves, down or away from the cylinder head 20.

- 25 The engine block 3 then is moved by the ignition of fuel, and for the duration of its combustion and for the length of the stroke that it moves upon the piston, with a 100% optimum angle (90 degrees) of leverage to turn the cylinder block upon its axis, and does so driven by said fuel combustion pressure exerting itself at least on one side and partly against the inside head of the top of the cylinder. The head of the

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cylinder is positioned in the optimum position to apply torque to rotate the block on its axis and is on one side of the block axis, and it is on one side, the trailing side, of a line from the block axis whereby it is at the 90° optimum position (of thrust direction to rotate a rotational body).

- 5 The engine block's rotation is aimed thereby to provide greater power than is possible by rotation conventionally by an engine crankshaft.

The engine of the invention works by the action of combustion pressure upon the rotary blockhead. Pushing of or reaction movement of the 10 gas from the opposite side of the combustion chamber, that in this instance, is the piston head end, and that the pressure to the cylinder head end is at a maximum and is obtained in a way that enables its useful employment and to such maximum by pressure transference to the engine fixed and stationary housing or base by the said cylinder 15 parts and gears. It is possible by this arrangement of such parts and operation that the engine's block rotation movement, the engines operation, including turning a central and output shaft, is assisted by the said pressure, (reactionary from fuel combustion) to the said piston head and piston. The piston, when it is midway down, may have the 20 angle of the crankshaft journal at also an optimum angle of leverage of 90 degrees (to the crankshaft axis), but at that position the connecting rod to the piston above will be of an angle (sideways) and not direct, so the maximum efficiency even at that position cannot be obtained. The crankshaft when in any other position, relevant to the downward and 25 power stroke of the piston, has reduced below 90 degrees angle of the journal and piston connection to the crankshaft axis.

The engine 1 can operate with a two-stroke firing cycle. There is shown on opposite sides, two pairs of pistons 5 at opposite ends of cylinders 4. One pair of pistons 5 are close to the end of a compression stroke and 30 are reaching the final top dead centre and ignition commencement region. On the opposite side of cylinder block 3 there is shown an opposite pair of pistons 5 close to the bottom end of their stroke, the end of their power stroke.

The engine 1 can also operate with a 4-stroke firing cycle, or indeed any other suitable cycles, by changing to suit ignition, fuel and air timing and supply means. The firing timing of different pistons can be sequential i.e. clockwise 1,2,3 and 4. The timing of a piston 5 affects the position of the 5 pinion gear to the ring gear teeth mesh positioning.

The hollow shaft 13 is one example of how the engine can provide its work output, and of one preferred way air and fuel can be supplied into the engine 1, and also the removal of exhaust gas out can be provided.

The engine 1 is shown to operate in a clockwise direction of rotation and 10 is illustrated as a horizontal installation or mounting. Engines 1 can have various drive connections such as to shaft 13, or directly to rotating block 2, to provide motive power to a vehicle or to an electrical generator or for any other type of engine application (not shown). The connection of air supply means can be via one end 15 of the shaft 13, or by a 15 manifold (circular, not shown) on one side of the engine housing 2.

Alternatively, by a manifold to the surface or side of a region of block 3 adapted to remain stationary with connections to housing 1, by provision 20 of bearings and seals as needed. When drawing air into the combustion chamber via an inlet (filtered) can have the combustion air inlet on one side of engine block 3, and the exhaust out means on the opposite side of engine block 3. Engine block 3 can have a sealing surface around its outer and circular edge, and suitable seals provided between the cylinder and the inside of the block.

Such seals can be one on each edge of the outer and circular side of 25 block 3 providing a lubrication oil chamber in between, and providing a sealed chamber on each side of the engine block 3. Combustion air inlet and exhaust gas outlet can also be arranged by ports to the casing 2, in a position opposite the outer circular edge of block 3, and arranged to communicate with exhaust gas aperture and air inlet aperture of the 30 rotating block.

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- In engine 1 can be of an air cooled type with means to supply air over cylinders or the engine block are provided by means such as air vents or slots through a cover on the housing 2. Alternatively, the engine can be water-cooled and custom designed radiators are provided, that rotates
- 5 with and which can be placed around the outer edge of engine block 3. Preferably each radiator would be dedicated to one cylinder or one self contained engine, whichever is used, preferably with a dedicated water pump, thermostat, pressure relief cap, temperature gauge, and air flow fan or slots in a cover or such like.
- 10 Alternatively, a number of dedicated radiators to a multi-cylinder engine can have common circulation with a manifold connection common to all, with inlets and outlets that close off one radiator should it fail or that engine or cylinder fail, so that the remainder are not affected.
- The engine is started by a conventional means such as a starter motor, the
- 15 starter motor turning a fly wheel or the rotor, the first piston moves away from the second piston by its deceleration and sucks in or allows clean combustion air in, fuel is introduced and said first piston returns moving forward by accelerating in speed to the back end and combustion chamber end of the said second piston, and compresses the air and fuel and a spark or flame is
- 20 provided that ignites the fuel. The combustion pressure then causes the rotor to accelerate driven by the second piston attached and thereby turns the drive shaft (or other means), and thereby drives the engine.
- At the same time that this is occurring, the second piston is moving forward inside the said circular cylinder (rotating with the rotor), whilst the first piston is decelerating again and moving, in effect backwards.
- 25 This first piston movement and second piston movement and phase can be called the power stroke of the pistons to afore cycle ignition process.
- When the first piston reaches the end of this backward direction (in effect) movement the gear mechanism and crank lever causes it to accelerate and to
- 30 return to the close proximity to the back of the second piston and in doing so

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enables it to push out spent air and fuel (exhaust gas). The gas preferably exits the cylinder via a port or valve (the is available through the cylinder at the precise and that location). In the instance that the engine's firing is two stroke cycle, fresh air is introduced ahead of the returning piston.

- 5 The engine continues to operate with the first piston caused to move away, backward from the second piston back end and in so doing so repeats the cycle.

- When the engine is of the two cycle firing stroke the air in flow and exhaust gas outflow is arranged in a system similar to normal engine two-stroke cycle,
- 10 except that the invention features improvements thereto because the piston or pistons travel rotationally and in one direction.

Where required for added power or balance more than one pair of pistons are provided, for each one circular cylinder.

- 15 Preferably the aperture in the rotor for the piston arm can be used to drain lubricating oil or excess or left over combustion gas, or as a path to allow air in or exhaust gas out (from or into the cylinder).

- The cylinders overall diameter is oversize with relationship to the size of the piston used diameter so that the engine power is itself oversized (excessive power). The increase in cylinder overall diameter and relevant to piston
- 20 diameter size provides the maximum and higher torque to the drive shaft from the piston from fuel burning than is otherwise possible with present known art engines.

- For one example of the above oversize feature the said cylinder for an average use such as a medium size car is of approximately one metre overall or outside cylinder diameter, whilst the said cylinder's inside diameter and piston diameter are approximately only 100mm. In such an engine having oversize cylinder to piston size enables a larger number of pistons to be used (because of the extra circumference and size of the cylinder

In said oversize engine feature greater inner side (central location) useable for engine parts space is provided.

This invention may have more than one cylinder on the same shaft than the single one described above, and where required the diameter size can be of a 5 minimum to better reduce the engine space needed.

In one preferred embodiment of this present invention where the engine has more than one set of pairs of pistons per one per single cylinder and rotor, the firing sequence is sequential (i.e. one piston set firing at a time. The sequence can be like a clock in a circle around the cylinder, one, two and three and so 10 on for example, or alternating from one side of the cylinder to a second, but still only one piston firing at one time.

For example if two pairs only are used the pistons firing is one and then the second. If 3 sets, of pistons are used the firing order is one, two and three. If four pistons are used: one, two three and four and so on. Whilst number 2 15 piston can be on the opposite side to the cylinder to the number one piston and so on.

The engine can have in fact any of the above firing cycles or any other due to and because of the piston or pistons having said independent movement.

In one preferred and alternative embodiment of the present invention a crank 20 action mechanism i.e. a crank shaft, or scotch yoke is provided, located inside the cylinder itself, together with a connecting rod to the piston, and with a shaft through an aperture in the cylinder and to the outside of the cylinder.

In one embodiment in place of a reciprocating movement arm to a first or second piston, located to and through a rotating rotor, there is provided a 25 rotating shaft turned by gears located at either end, and of any type when the engine turns, and the turn crank shaft or scotch yoke or other similar mechanism inside the cylinder preferably to one side of a piston, and thereby by this arrangement the need for elongated slot in the rotor for a reciprocating shaft is overcome.

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In one embodiment of the last paragraph the piston may locate over the crank shaft or scotch yoke and have its connection thereto such as a connecting rod to the inside of the piston also, and inside the sealing rings at either end.

- Preferably in this alternative embodiment or variation embodiment as per the
- 5 last paragraph above, the first piston is caused to move via said crank mechanism inside the said cylinder located on the back end of said first piston, preferably having the crank arm inside the back end of the said first piston to minimize the space taken, the mechanism providing the same operation as aforesaid when the crank is outside of the cylinder.
- 10 In this embodiment the shaft extends out from the cylinder via a bearing and seals as needed, and inlet air may be ducted in via the shaft to the piston region, the shaft being deliberately oversize as needed if used as an air path. The piston may also have ports or valves to allow such air to be introduced into the combustion chamber. Such ports or valves may be controlled by the
- 15 rotation of the crankshaft or and or by the piston's reciprocating movement within the cylinder. In this embodiment the cylinder itself rotates and the rotor and slot aperture in the cylinder are eliminated. The cylinder is mounted on the drive shaft via such as a centre portion to the cylinder inner side to the position of the drive shaft, and the cylinder is located within a stationary
- 20 engine housing, such housing having bearing and seals to support said drive shaft.

The above alternative embodiment features the shaft to the crank inside the cylinder being connected on the outside to a drive mechanism to cause it to rotate, such as a gear, a planetary gear or gear wheel like gear, that in turn connects to a matching tooth gear, a ring or star gear, that is stationary and located on the said housing. The operation of the piston is therefore the same as above described.

The present invention in any one of the above described embodiments or examples features having a shaft from the cylinder to the region of the centre location drive shaft, this said shaft preferably has such as a gear on a first end adjacent to the drive shaft, and such gear is connected to a second gear that

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- rotates on the drive shaft and is fixed to the drive shaft when the drive shaft is turned, thereby causing said shaft to turn, and said shaft at its second end the end inside the said cylinder then turns a crank action mechanism connected to aforesaid first pistons. Said shaft may be provided inside an embodiment
5 using a rotor that rotates and extends into the cylinder, or the aforesaid alternative embodiment where the cylinder itself rotates and the rotor is eliminated.

In one embodiment there are counterweights arranged to reciprocate when the engine is started, one for each piston at least to balance the engine
10 rotating cylinder block or housing or rotor to overcome out of balance as the piston weight moves from one point on the rotating path of the engine to a second. Alternatively on a 3 pistoned engine for instance, each piston fires at the same time.

In one embodiment, chains and chain sprockets are used in place of gears
15 and for the connection of the crankshaft ends (to the outside world of the engine). In one embodiment the engine is made of a piston cylinder block and or housing main and rotating component, the engine then has two internally leveled out type halves hat go over and around the above said cylinder block and has locating space and precision fitting design for the crankshaft and con
20 rod and crankshaft bearings (on each side) and that join together to complete the piston sump and connection to the crank engine block (but stationary component of the engine).

In the embodiment of the invention where a rotating rotor inside one side of a circular cylinder is used the moveable piston is replaced with a semi circular
25 ball like mechanism that moves rotating on a shaft. The said ball adapted to match a curve in a fixed piston on either side in the cylinder, and by its shape wherein at least one section of one side is more or less flat, the ball can create a firing cycle and stroke and one side to a combustion chamber, in a manner that replaces the first piston behind a second piston.

30 In one variation of the invention the piston and crank mechanism referred to of the first and independently moving piston is replaced with a rotary action

piston inside the cylinder, matched and together with a change in the design (shape) of the particular portion of the cylinder, where the rotary piston is located and used. The rotary piston is adapted to transmit the combustion of fuel energy to the rotating cylinder via a fixed engine head like portion or back 5 of a second piston. The rotary action is by its shaft being conventional and connected via a said first gear, connected to the said second gear.

In this embodiment the said rotor features being shaped suitable to provide the required and above described firing cycle, and combustion chamber one side, and is not required to itself drive the engine. Adjacent said rotor is a 10 fixed head like forming across the cylinder that is driven by the ignition of fuel pressure, such head portion may be of a particular shape to match the requirements of a rotating rotary piston as above described, used therein.

It is considered therefore that an engine such as that described herein would prove to be of benefit to those that would benefit from an engine of increased 15 mechanical efficiency, which is smaller and lighter, and therefore more fuel efficient.

Although the invention has been herein shown and described in what is conceived to be the most practical and preferred embodiment, it is recognised that departures can be made within the scope of the invention, which is not to 20 be limited to the details described herein but is to be accorded the full scope of the appended claims so as to embrace any and all equivalent devices and apparatus.